



## 2007 Survey of Afghans Summary Report

### Background

Canadians are clearly divided on our country's role in Afghanistan and not optimistic about the outcome. The latest Environics' FOCUS CANADA survey numbers (from September-October) show that fewer than half (45%) of Canadians support the current mission, only one in three believe it is very (8%) or somewhat (24%) likely to be successful in the end, and a plurality (43%) want to see our troops return home before the mission is scheduled to end in 2009.

In Canada we worry about the loss of our military personnel, and, above all, whether this mission is worth the price: Are we and other NATO forces accomplishing something positive for Afghanistan and its people, or are we stuck in the kind of un-winnable quagmire that seems to be taking shape in Iraq? Here at home the public is uncertain and divided on this question, but what about the citizens of Afghanistan – What is *their* perspective on the presence of Canada and other countries in their country, and on the struggle to establish a stable state after almost 30 years of continual conflict?

Surprisingly, no Canadian organization has yet to systematically ask the people of Afghanistan about their country and the role we and our allies are playing there. To address this gap, Environics Research launched a public opinion survey of the Afghan people to address these very issues. The research was the initiative of Environics, in partnership with three national media sponsors – The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, The Globe and Mail, and La Presse -- and two respected academic think tanks at the University of Toronto – the Munk Centre for International Studies, and the Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian studies (CERES). There was no involvement from government or other organizations.

### Methodology

The research was designed by Environics, in consultation with its media and academic partners. The survey was conducted for Environics by D3 Systems Inc. and its subsidiary, the Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research (ACSOR-Surveys), based in Kabul. D3 Systems/ACSOR established the capability to conduct country-wide public opinion surveys across Afghanistan

following the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, and includes among its clients the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), ABC News, the Asia Foundation, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

The Environics survey was conducted by ACSOR between September 17 and 24, 2007 with a representative sample of 1,578 adult Afghans (18 years and older) across all 34 of the country's provinces. The surveys were conducted in-person in people's homes in either Dari or Pashto, the two dominant languages. Female interviewers interviewed women and male interviewers interviewed Afghan men, and the sample was stratified to ensure a 50-50 distribution on gender.

The survey sample consisted of 1,278 interviews conducted across the country, plus an additional 300 interviews to provide over-samples of 270 interviews in Kabul (the country's capital) and 260 in the province of Kandahar, where the Canadian mission is based. The margins of sampling error for these samples are plus or minus 3.8%, 7.3% and 7.3%, respectively (at the 95% confidence level). The response rate for this survey was 85 percent, a rate almost unheard of today for research conducted in the western world. Further details on the methodology used to conduct this survey are available from Environics.

## **Sample Profile**

Unlike surveys in Canada, it is not possible to precisely compare Afghan survey samples to the general population because the country has not conducted a census since 1979. The final sample for this survey captured all segments of the population with respect to region and settlement size, and such important demographics as gender, age, education, ethnicity, income, and working status.

The characteristics of this population are very different from what Canadians are accustomed to. For example, almost six in ten (58%) of our respondents have never gone to school (i.e. are technically illiterate); compared with only four percent who have had any college or university training. Only one in four (26%) work full-time and another 11 percent work part time. These people are most likely to be farmers (24%), farm workers (12%), labourers (7%) or skilled workers (15%), with fewer in sales (13%), office/clerical workers (10%) or professionals, small business owners or executives /managers (11%).

Afghanistan is a Muslim country, mostly Sunni (88%), with the rest Shia (11%) or Ismaeli (1%). All major ethnic groups are represented: Pashtun (38%), Tajik (34%), Hazara (12%), Uzbek (7%), plus a smattering of others (9%). In Kabul the dominant group is Tajik (63%) and in Kandahar Pashtun (98%).

## Survey Results

The following are key results from the survey. All results are expressed as a percentage.

### OVERALL DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY.

Despite the terrible toll suffered by Afghans for decades, Afghans are surprisingly upbeat about the direction they see their country moving. A majority (51%) say their country is going in the right direction compared with 28 percent who say it is heading in the wrong direction, although opinion is more divided in Kandahar (48% right direction versus 43% wrong direction). When asked, Afghans say the country is heading in the right direction because they are feeling safer, see reconstruction, disarmament and schools opening for girls. Those who believe the country is heading in the wrong direction emphasize the lack of security and safety, or poor economic conditions.

<b><i>Is Afghanistan going in the right direction or wrong direction?</i></b>		
	National	Kandahar
Right Direction	51	48
Wrong Direction	28	43
No Change	17	7
Don't know / No answer	3	1

Seven in ten (73%) believe that women in Afghanistan today are better off than five years ago (under the Taliban), a view that is equally widespread in Kandahar and among women across the country.

<b><i>Status of women in Afghanistan today compared with 2002</i></b>		
	Men	Women
Better off	72	75
Worse off	10	9
About the same	17	14
Don't know / No answer	1	2

When considering their own situation, six in ten (60%) Afghans say they are personally better off today than they were in 2002 (same in Kandahar), but somewhat less apt to believe they are better off than they were one year ago (36%) (51% in Kandahar). On both questions, women are more positive about the trend than are men.

<b><i>Personal situation today compared with as you were in . .</i></b>		
	2002	Last year
Better off	60	36
Worse off	14	19
About the same	26	45

## CONFIDENCE IN THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

Afghans voice confidence in their national government. Seven in ten (71%) are very or somewhat positive in their general opinion of the Karzi government (versus 20% who are negative), and six in ten (59%) believe the Karzi government represents their interests as an Afghan. On both questions views are more positive in Kandahar. Across ethnic groups, opinion of the Karzi government is strongest among Uzbek, Hazara and Pashtun (from which the Taliban recruit), and weakest among the Tajik. The minority who believe the Karzi government does not represent their interests mention such reasons as unemployment, corruption in government, insecurity and lack of reconstruction and lack of international assistance.

<i>Opinion of the Karzai Government</i>		
	National	Kandahar
Very Positive	31	34
Somewhat Positive	40	43
Somewhat Negative	13	10
Very Negative	7	7
Neither / Don't know	8	7

Strong majorities of Afghans express at least some confidence in the National Army (84%) and National Police (76%), with opinions marginally lower in Kandahar. In sharp contrast, only one in four (26%) express such confidence in the local militia in their area (which includes private security forces and local warlords). Opinions are largely consistent across ethnic groups.

<i>Degree of confidence in ...</i>			
	Afghan National Army	Afghan National Police	Local Area Militia
A lot of confidence	50	42	9
Some confidence	34	34	17
Little confidence	8	12	19
No confidence at all	4	9	43
Depends / Don't know	4	4	12

Close to half (48%) of Afghans are aware of the Community Development Councils (CDCs) which have been set up in many parts of the country to help guide local reconstruction (with considerable assistance from CIDA). And those familiar with these Councils believe they are making a positive difference, with seven in ten saying they are helping some (38%) or a great deal (31%) (66% and 9%, respectively in Kandahar). Only 10 percent say they are not helping at all.

<b>Impact of Community Development Councils (CDCs)</b> (among those aware of CDCs (48%))		
	National	Kandahar
Helping a great deal	31	9
Helping some	38	66
Helping a little	18	21
Not helping at all	10	3
Don't know / No answer	2	2

## THE INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

**Positive or negative influence.** What do Afghans think about the multitude of foreign countries that have been present in their country over the past five years? Most believe this has been a positive presence. Six in ten (60%) Afghans say the foreign presence is a good thing for their country, compared with 16 percent who say it is a bad thing; another 22 percent are more ambivalent (seeing this as both good and bad) (views are less positive in Kandahar). In terms of the foreign presence in their local area, Afghans are also more positive (49%) than negative (26%), although to a lesser extent (in Kandahar, 57% say the local foreign presence is a good thing).

<b>Presence of foreign countries is good or bad for...</b>		
	The country	Your local area
A good thing	60	49
A bad thing	16	26
Equally good/bad	22	21
Don't know / No answer	2	5

Are the foreign countries doing a good job fighting the Taliban? Yes, say nearly two thirds (64%) of Afghans, versus 17 percent who say a bad job (in Kandahar, 58% say a good job versus 27% who disagree). What about reconstruction assistance? Again nearly two thirds (65%) across the country they are doing a good job in this area (versus 15 who disagree), as do 63 percent in Kandahar where Canadian efforts are concentrated (versus 21% who disagree). And in training the army and the police, 75 percent of Afghans positively rate the efforts of foreign countries, compared with only nine percent who disagree (ratings are somewhat lower in Kandahar, with 61% saying good job versus 22% who say a bad job).

<b>Foreign countries are doing a good or bad job of ....</b>			
	Fighting the Taliban	Reconstruction Assistance	Training Army/Police
Good Job	64	65	75
Bad Job	17	15	9
Neither good or bad	17	18	10
Don't know / No answer	2	2	5

**Awareness of foreign countries in Afghanistan.** Which foreign countries are understood by the local population to be in Afghanistan with troops, aid workers or business people? Is Canada on the radar? In terms of public awareness of the presence of foreign countries (covering all functions and roles), Canada ranks fourth after the United States (95%), Germany (63%), the U.K. (52%) and then Canada at 46 percent. In Kandahar, Canada comes second with 58 percent recognition, well behind the United States (at 98%).

<b>Awareness of foreign countries currently in Afghanistan</b>		
<i>Top 10 mentions</i>		
	National	Kandahar
USA	95	98
Germany	63	54
Great Britain	52	52
<b>Canada</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>58</b>
France	37	27
Italy	32	29
India	31	42
China	25	23
Pakistan	24	20
Iran	21	15

Who, top of mind, is fighting the Taliban? Nationwide, it is almost exclusively the United States (89%) that is seen as playing this role. Few mention any other country, including Germany (4%) and, the U.K. (3%), with virtually no mention of Canada. Even in Kandahar (where our forces have lost 71 soldiers and counting), it is the U.S. who is seen as the military presence (90%), with only two percent naming Canada. This result is in sharp contrast to the perspective within Canada, where the public is painfully aware of our troop casualties, the highest proportion of any foreign country.

<b>Awareness of Foreign County Roles (Kandahar Subsample)</b>			
<i>Top mentions</i>			
	Fighting the Taliban	Reconstruction Assistance	Training Arm/Police
USA	90	2	2
Great Britain	5	27	-
Germany	3	28	10
<b>Canada</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>
India	-	4	17
China	-	1	5

What about public awareness of who is providing reconstruction assistance? Do the Afghan people know of Canadians activity or are we invisible here too? On a national level, Canada has low visibility (at 4% awareness), well behind the U.K. (39%) and Germany (27%). But in Kandahar awareness of Canada's participation jumps to 25 percent, in a statistical tie with these other two countries. In the role of providing reconstruction assistance, the U.S. is much less visible (with only 1% awareness nationwide, and 2% in Kandahar).

And who do Afghans see as being involved in helping train the Afghan National Army and the National Police? Nationally, Canada (14%) comes second only to Germany (22%), and Canada earns the highest recognition in Kandahar (23%), followed by India (17%) and Germany (10%).

Apart from knowing which foreign countries are operating in Afghanistan, which stand out as being seen to be doing an especially good or bad job of helping the country where it needs it most? In being recognized for doing a good job, Canada comes fourth (20%) among Afghans across the country, behind the U.S. (64%), Germany (42%) and India (21%). In Kandahar, Canada is third-most mentioned (37%), once again behind the U.S. (64%) and India (43%) (which provides mostly goods and entrepreneurs).

<b>Countries doing a good job of helping Afghanistan</b>		
<i>Top mentions</i>		
	National	Kandahar
USA	64	64
Germany	42	36
India	21	43
<b>Canada</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>37</b>
Great Britain	19	26
France	14	12
Italy	9	6

And which countries stand out as doing a bad job in Afghanistan? Not Canada; which is cited by only three percent nationwide and even fewer (2%) in Kandahar where we have the greatest presence. Even the United States, perceived as leading the military effort, at 13% nationwide and 5 percent in Kandahar is not a target of widespread criticism. The principal external culprits in the eyes of Afghans are not the foreigners from other far away civilizations but their next door neighbours: Pakistan (64%) to the east and Iran (34%) to the west.

**Canadian Mission in Kandahar.** The survey posed additional questions to Afghans in Kandahar province regarding Canada’s mission and presence. Close to nine in ten (87%) Kandahar residents are aware that Canada is active in their province (when prompted). When asked to evaluate the job the Canadian military is doing in Kandahar, six in ten residents give our troops a very positive (26%) or somewhat positive (34%) rating, compared with one in five who are negative (19%), and another 21 percent who cannot say either way. Those with a positive assessment say this is because they see the Canadians establishing security and helping to reconstruction clinics and schools. The minority critical of the mission emphasize the killing of innocent people and searching houses without permission.

<b>Opinion of Canadian Troops in Kandahar</b>	
	Kandahar
Very Positive	26
Somewhat positive	34
Somewhat negative	14
Very negative	5
Neither / Don't know	21

Are Canadians doing a better or worse job than other countries in helping Afghanistan? By a four-to-one margin, Kandahar residents say Canada is doing a better job (48%) rather than a worse job (12%); the remainder sees no difference (22%) or are unable to offer an opinion (17%).

<b>Canadians versus other foreign countries in Afghanistan</b>	
	Kandahar
Doing a better job	48
Doing a worse job	12
No difference	22
Don't know / No answer	17

Just over one in ten (13%) Kandahar residents report any direct experience with Canadians in the past 12 months, in most cases from military passing through their village or meeting aid workers. Of this group, close to half (46%) say this contact was a positive experience, compared with 35 percent who considered it to be negative (the remaining 20% couldn’t comment either way).



## THE OPPOSITION

**The Taliban.** What is public opinion of the Taliban, who ruled the country prior to 2002? When asked, almost three quarters of Afghans nationwide have a very negative (53%) or somewhat negative (20%) opinion of the Taliban, compared with only 14 percent who hold a positive view. Opinions are marginally less critical in Kandahar (67% negative versus 20% positive), and among Pashtuns (64% negative versus 26% positive). Moreover, the public is most likely to believe that the Taliban enjoys the support of only a few Afghans (50%), rather than some (24%) or most (7%), with Kandahar opinion only slightly more positive toward the Taliban.

<i>Opinion of the Taliban</i>		
	National	Kandahar
Very Positive	3	3
Somewhat positive	11	17
Somewhat Negative	20	20
Very Negative	53	47
Neither / Don't know	12	14

There is no consensus about the current unity within the Taliban today. One third (35%) believe the Taliban are divided into a number of different factions that do not agree on important issues, while 29 percent see them as a united political force; the remainder do not believe either characterization fits this group. In Kandahar there is greater likelihood of seeing the Taliban as divided (43%) versus united (14%). Across the country, however, it is Pashtuns who are most apt to see the Taliban as united (36%), as is also the case among residents of Eastern and South Central regions.

<i>Taliban best described as</i>		
	National	Kandahar
Divided into factions that do not agree on important issues	35	43
A united political force	29	14
Neither / Other	23	20
Don't Know / No Answer	12	23

**Al Qaeda.** As for the infamous terrorist group that first inspired the post 9/11 American-inspired invasion of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, sympathy among Afghans is very low. Fewer than one in five (19%) nationwide (and only 7% in Kandahar) believe Al Qaeda is a “positive Islamic force in the world today.” This sentiment rises to 28 percent among Pashtuns and residents of the Eastern (38%), South Central (36%) and Central/Hazarjat (37%) regions of the country.

<b>Opinion of Al Qaeda as Islamic Force in the world today</b>		
	National	Kandahar
Positive Force	19	7
Negative Force	54	72
Neither / Other	13	13
Don't know / No answer	13	8

**Terrorist Tactics.** How do Afghans feel about some of the harsh terrorist tactics currently employed by the Taliban and other insurgents? More than seven in ten express the view that both the use of kidnapping (72%) and suicide bombings (72%) are *never* justified, compared with just 13 percent who feel they are justified some if not all of the time. Opinions are somewhat softer in Kandahar, among Pashtun, and among residents of the Eastern region.

<b>When are terrorist tactics justified?</b>		
	Kidnapping	Suicide Bombs
All the time	3	3
Some of the time	10	9
Only rarely	13	14
Never	72	71
Don't know / No answer	3	3

## **FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION**

**Progress since 2003.** Survey results show that the Afghan public supports the international presence in their country, but do they think are making clear progress since arriving in 2003? In terms of fighting the Taliban, a clear majority believe that a lot of progress (25%) or some progress (37%) has been made, compared with one in three who say little (20%) or no (16%) progress. In Kandahar (where the Canadian military is focused and fighting the Taliban continues), six in ten (61%) believe at least some progress has been made, compared with 40 percent who disagree.

<b>Progress made by foreign countries since 2003</b>			
	Fighting the Taliban	Reconstruction Assistance	Training Army / Police
A lot of progress	25	26	37
Some progress	37	42	36
Little progress	20	23	19
No progress at all	16	8	5
Don't know / No answer	2	1	2

Has there been progress in providing reconstruction assistance since 2003? Two-thirds say a lot (26%) or some (42%) progress, compared with fewer than half as many (31%) who say little or none. Significantly, three-quarters (74%) of Kandahar residents see at least some progress in this area, compared with only 26 percent who believe otherwise.

And has there been progress in training the Afghan army and military? Once again, most Afghans see a positive trend, with three-quarters seeing a lot (37%) or some (36%) progress on this front, compared with only 24 percent who see little or none. In Kandahar, eight in ten (80%) residents see some or more progress in such training by foreign countries.

Overall, these results reflect both surprising and heartening numbers for Canadian troops and public when they reflect on the substantial sacrifices of our soldiers, as well as the significant financial and other investments our government and NGOs have made in this country over the past five years.

**Likely Outcome of the Conflict.** Despite this sense of progress over the past few years, Afghans remain divided about what the future holds for their country. A plurality (40%) are optimists and believe that with foreign assistance the Afghan government will defeat the Taliban, while half as many (19%) think the Taliban will prevail once foreign troops leave. The remaining 40 percent are currently unsure, indicating it is too early to say (29%) or are unable to offer an opinion (11%). Opinions are marginally more optimistic in Kandahar, where 45 percent believe the Afghan government will win in the end.

<i>Who will prevail in the current conflict?</i>		
	National	Kandahar
Afghan Government, with foreign assistance	40	45
Taliban, once foreign troops leave	19	16
Too early to say / Don't know	40	38

**Should Foreign Troops Leave or Stay?** How do Afghans view the timetable for foreign troop withdrawals from their country, which has been wracked by conflict for more than 30 years. There is no public consensus on this question, but given the positive influence most attribute to the international forces, the plurality (43%) of Afghans say that foreign troops should remain “however long it takes to defeat the Taliban and restore order.” By comparison, one-quarter are looking for a relatively quick exit, either immediately (14%) or within the next year (11%). Another quarter take the middle view of wanting them to stay either two more (12%) or three to five more (15%) years.

In Kandahar, there is somewhat greater desire for a quicker exit (31% want the troops to stay as long as necessary versus 32% would like to see the troops gone within one year), but also a greater sense of uncertainty (with 13% unable to offer an opinion, compared with 5% nationwide).

<b>How much longer should foreign troops remain?</b>		
	National	Kandahar
Leave right away	14	15
Remain 1 more year	11	17
Remain 2 more years	12	9
Remain 3-5 more years	15	9
However long it takes to defeat Taliban and return order	43	31
Other / Don't know	5	19

While these results do not reveal public consensus on this issue, it stands in stark contrast to current public opinion in Iraq, where 47 percent of citizens believe the U.S. led coalitions forces should leave now (based on an ABC News poll conducted in August 2007 by D3 Systems).

While Afghans do not all agree on a timetable for when foreign troops will leave their country, it is an issue that appears to be an important one to most. Almost seven in ten (68%) say the question of when they leave matters to them a great deal, a view most widely held among the Hazara (80%), and those living in the Central/Kabul (78%) and Northern (78%) regions.

**Negotiations with the Taliban.** In spite of the widespread negative feelings about the Taliban, a strong desire for peace and stability, a strong majority (74%) of Afghans nationwide (and 85% in Kandahar) to support negotiations between the Karzi government and the Taliban. Beyond negotiations, there is also modest majority support for the idea of a coalition agreement in which the Karzi government shares power with the Taliban. Just over half strongly (25%) or somewhat (29%) support such a coalition, compared with one-third (33%) who oppose it

<b>Should the Afghan Government deal with the Taliban?</b>		
	Negotiations	Coalition Government
Strongly support	36	25
Somewhat support	38	29
Somewhat Oppose	9	14
Strongly Oppose	9	19
Depends / Don't know	8	13

Support for both negotiations and a coalition government is strongest among the Pashtun, as well as among residents of Kandahar, and the Eastern, South Central and Southwestern regions of the country. Support for a coalition government is weakest in the Northern and Central/Hazrjat regions.